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ABSTRACT

To examine the views and experiences of high school journalism faculty regarding their efforts at recruiting minority students into journalism, a study surveyed journalism teachers from 100 randomly selected high schools in Kentucky (31 teachers responded). Questions concerned the teachers' college education, teaching loads, overall enrollment, and minority enrollment. Teachers were also asked why minorities are attracted or not attracted to high school journalism, what minority students look for when considering colleges and college majors, and what parents of minorities consider important in their children's college and career decisions. Results revealed that 44.5% of the responding teachers had Kentucky certification in journalism education, although the majority of teachers majored or minored in English in college. Journalism/publication classes had a 4% minority enrollment. On newspaper staffs, 8.1% of the 257 newspaper staffers were minorities, while 5.5% of the 306 total yearbook staffers were minorities. All minority staff members planned on attending college, with 23% of the yearbook staff and 52% of the newspaper staff planning on majoring in journalism/communication. Kentucky teachers were most successful in recruiting students through recommendations from other teachers, their own recruiting efforts, or through the student's personal interest. Journalism teachers felt minority students most strongly considered cost, advice from peers, availability of financial aid, and the percentage of minorities attending a particular college. (A copy of the survey, survey cover letter, follow-up letter, and respondents comments are appended.) (MM)

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MINORITIES IN HIGH SCHOOL JOURNALISM:

A SURVEY OF KENTUCKY SCHOOLS

by

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MINORITIES IN HIGH SCHOOL JOURNALISM:

A SURVEY OF KENTUCKY SCHOOLS

Minority representation in journalism continues to fall behind anticipated numbers. Although minorities in the communication field have increased slightly, the goal of the American Society of Newspaper Editors is to bring minority representation in newsrooms to 17 percent by the year 2000. This accomplishment, however, looks doubtful. In order to bring more minorities into the profession, efforts need to be increased to help students when they are forming their career choices. Since most high schools offer courses in journalism or work on publications, the high school level is a logical area to emphasize minority recruitment.

In an attempt to analyze the minority interest in high school journalism in Kentucky, one-hundred Kentucky high school journalism teachers/advisers were sent questionnaires concerning their college education, teaching loads, and minority recruitment efforts. Teachers also were asked their opinions about minority students and minority students' parents regarding college and career selections.

Results showed that fewer than half of the responding teachers had certification in journalism, and only two teachers had majored in journalism/communications when in college. Further results showed that few minorities are involved in Kentucky high school journalism. Those minorities who are interested get involved because of the chance to improve writing skills, to develop leadership, and to add a journalism class as an elective. Although all the minority students planned on going to college, only one-third planned on a major or career in journalism. Journalism teachers said students, when choosing a college, mainly considered cost, as did their parents. In deciding on a career, teachers felt their minority students mainly considered salary and personal fulfillment, while parents considered salary and room for advancement.

This small study can be replicated in other areas to determine if the trend of little minority interest in careers in journalism is consistent across the nation. To increase minority interest, more needs to be done on the college level to provide journalism classes or certification for teachers and advisers. All high school teachers and administrators need to be encouraged to look for qualified minority students to consider journalism careers. College faculty and practicing journalists need to keep in mind that in states such as Kentucky, there is little minority enrollment in high schools in rural areas, and larger minority enrollment in urban areas.

Minorities in high school journalism:
a survey of Kentucky schools

Introduction

Although journalists are aware of the need for increasing minorities in their ranks, there is still slow progress in integrating the profession. The American Society of Newspaper Editors has a goal of increasing non-whites in newsrooms so that the number is proportional to the population on a regional basis. This would require changing the low minority representation to 17 percent by the year 2000. Meeting that goal, however, does not seem too realistic. In 1986, newspaper minority employment was 5.6 percent, a 1.6 percent increase in seven years. At that rate, it will take 44 years to reach ASNE's goal. (Guimary, 1986)

In a recent study for the Southern Newspaper Publishers Association, Dr. Julie Dodd found that 70 percent of professional journalists responding to her questionnaire said they had been influenced by a career choice through their high school journalism experiences. (Dodd, 1987) Now more than ever, students seriously think about career possibilities while in the secondary grades. With colleges making stronger recruiting efforts in high schools, students are being exposed to more opportunities which require earlier decisions. In another 1987 study, it was determined that decisions at a high school level are crucial, because a majority of students have a fairly firm idea of their career preferences and programs of study before entering college. (Burgoon, et. al., 1987)

Getting high school minority students interested in the

journalism profession is a logical way of increasing the number of minorities in the newsroom. Burgoon, et. al., wrote, "Since students have made relatively firm commitments about educational priorities and career preferences before they enter college, increased attention to college recruiting may have fewer results than programs aimed at high school students who are engaged in decision making." (Burgoon) In a study presented to AEJMC in 1986, reasons cited by minorities going into journalism careers included strong writing abilities, an interest in public affairs, and an early experience on working with a school publication. The researchers concluded that minority high school students need to have contact with minorities in the journalism profession, and that recruiters should be positive and not defensive about journalism's interest in minorities. (Tipton, et. al., 1986)

The effort to recruit minority high school students to consider journalism careers is compounded by the problem that the number of blacks entering college is decreasing. In 1980 the percentage of black high school graduates entering college was 44.1 percent. In 1984 that was down to 38.5 percent. This decrease is attributed to the fact that more black high school graduates are choosing to go into the armed services, working in business or industry, or continuing their education at non-collegiate schools. (Arbeiter, 1987)

The Problem

Are high school minority students interested in journalism? What is being done to encourage high school minorities to go to college and pursue careers in journalism? Help can come from the high school journalism teacher, college faculty, and those working in journalism. This study deals with the high school journalism faculty, their views, and their experiences in recruiting minority students into journalism. As a sample study, only schools in Kentucky were surveyed. As a point of reference, there are 23 daily and 125 non-daily newspapers in Kentucky, 241 AM/FM radio stations and 13 television stations. According to the Kentucky Department of Educational Research, of 37,189 Kentucky high school graduates in 1987, 3,213 (9 percent) were non-whites.

Methodology

For this survey, one-hundred Kentucky high schools were randomly selected from a list of 288 public and private high schools on file at the Western Kentucky University Computing Center. A cover letter and questionnaire were sent to each teacher in October, with a follow-up letter and questionnaire one week later. (Appendix I)

The questionnaire was divided into several areas. Questions about the teachers' college education and teaching loads were asked. Teachers were asked to give information about their classes and publications concerning overall enrollment and minority enrollment. Finally, journalism teachers/advisers were asked to give their views on why minorities are attracted or not attracted to high school journalism, and what minority students look for when considering colleges and college majors. Since parents play such an influential role in their children's career-making decisions, teachers were asked for opinions on what they feel parents of minorities consider important in their children's college and career decisions.

Results

Of the thirty-one high schools represented in the results, enrollment ranged from two hundred to 2,000, for an average enrollment of 971. Minority enrollment ranged from zero to 1,124, for an average minority enrollment of 12 percent. This included four schools with no minorities, and four with minority enrollment over 20 percent.

Of the teachers who responded, 87 percent taught in the areas of English and journalism. Fifteen of the thirty-one teachers majored in English in college, with history and business following as the most common majors. One respondent majored in journalism and one in mass communication. Seven teachers minored in English and seven in history, for the most common minors. Of the respondents, twelve (44.5 percent) had Kentucky certification

TABLE I

College majors/minors of respondents (in numbers):	MAJOR	MINOR
	English (15)	English (7)
	History (3)	History (7)
	Business (2)	Speech (3)
	Music (1)	Sociology (1)
	Philosophy (1)	Latin (1)
	Mass Comm. (1)	Spanish (1)
	Spanish (1)	Psychology (1)
	El. Ed. (1)	
	Lang. Arts (1)	
	Sociology (1)	
	French (1)	
	Journalism (1)	
Teachers with/without journalism certification	WITH	WITHOUT
	12 (44.5%)	15 (55.5%)

in journalism education (six hours of college journalism), while fifteen (55.5 percent) did not.

Thirteen teachers advised a yearbook, twenty-five advised a newspaper, and three advised a magazine, with some teachers advising more than one publication. Only two newspapers and one magazine were produced outside of a scheduled class. Enrollment in journalism/publication classes averaged twenty-three, with 4 percent average minority enrollment.

Regarding enrollment on yearbook staffs, fifteen (5.5 percent) of the 306 total yearbook staffers were minorities. Of these, all planned on going to college, with four (23 percent) planning on a major in journalism/communication. On the newspaper staffs, twenty-one (8.1 percent) of the 257 newspaper staffers were minorities. Of these, all planned on going to college, with eleven (52 percent) planning a journalism/communication

TABLE II

	YEARBOOK	NEWSPAPER	MAGAZINE	TOTAL
Student enrollment (in number)	306	257	68	631
Minority students enrolled (in number and percent)	15 (5.5%)	21 (8.1%)	5 (7%)	41 (6.4%)
Minority students planning on going to college (percent of minorities enrolled)	15 (100%)	21 (100%)	5 (100%)	41 (100%)
Minority students planning on a college major in journalism/ communications (percent of minorities enrolled)	4 (23%)	11 (52%)	0 (0%)	15 (36%)

major. On magazines, five (7 percent) of the sixty-eight staffers were minorities, with all planning on going to college and none planning a journalism/communication major. Minorities planning on going to college to major in journalism/communications equaled 2 percent of the total number of students in journalism.

In an effort to attract minority students into journalism/publication programs, Kentucky teachers said they were most successful with recommendations from other teachers, their own recruiting efforts, or through the student's personal interest. Advisers felt students were attracted by wanting to improve their writing skills, taking the class as an elective, and having the opportunity to develop leadership. On the other hand, advisers found that minorities were not interested in journalism or publications at the high school level because of the students' poor language skills, apathy, the low number of minorities in the school, and scheduling conflicts.

Regarding minorities and their college decisions, journalism teachers felt minority students most strongly considered cost, advice from peers, availability of financial aid and the percentage of minorities attending a particular college. Advisers felt parents were mostly concerned with cost, availability of financial aid, and scholastic reputation. For choosing a major in college, minority students, according to their teachers' perceptions, were most concerned with average salary, personal fulfillment, and working conditions. Those same teachers felt that the parents of minorities were concerned with their childrens' future average salary, room for advancement, and working conditions.

Conclusion

From this small Kentucky survey, the future of minorities in journalism looks bleak. Although the secondary journalism situation in Kentucky differs from some other states, there are similarities which can be applied to journalism education across the nation. Only one high school teacher had a journalism background from college, and fewer than half had Kentucky certification, which requires only six hours of college journalism. Obviously, better-trained teachers are needed in this state to promote minority careers in journalism. Journalists in Kentucky need to work together to strengthen the requirements for certification in journalism. If teachers are more aware and enthused about journalism careers, their students will be also. Universities in the state need to make evening, weekend and off-campus classes in journalism available to secondary teachers. High school administrators should encourage teachers to seek certification in journalism, and offer financial help to those teachers.

Nearly all of the publications in schools in this survey were produced as part of a class activity. Teachers of these classes said that minority students were attracted to journalism classes because the courses helped them improve their writing. Since these teachers also said they rely most heavily on recommendations from other teachers for minority enrollment, other teachers in the schools need to be made aware of journalism opportunities for minorities, and the need to steer good students into those journalism classes. College journalism faculty and commercial journalists need to work with all high school English teachers in an effort to promote careers for minorities in

journalism.

Practicing journalists should be aware of the fact that high school teachers are having a difficult time of attracting minorities towards the profession. As Dr. Dodd pointed out in her manual, there are numerous avenues journalists can take to find the best and brightest to enter the profession.

A problem this survey shows is that in a state such as Kentucky, many schools have few or no minorities. Minorities tend to be in larger metropolitan areas, leaving many rural high schools poorly represented. College recruiters and journalists need to be aware of this, in an effort to have heavy recruiting efforts and maximum support for minority journalists in large cities. And as the teachers' comments show, schools with few minorities could benefit from outside help in exposing those few students to the benefits of the profession. (Appendix II)

Journalism teachers felt that minority students and parents were most concerned with cost when picking a college. Colleges and practicing journalists need to make scholarships and financial aid (internships, work-study arrangements) available to minority students so that they may attend a university which offers a journalism major. Editors need to strongly support such programs as the Dow Jones Newspaper Fund summer minority workshops at various universities.

APPENDIX I
LETTERS OF TRANSMITTAL



WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

BOWLING GREEN, KENTUCKY 42101

Department of Journalism

*Minorities in high school journalism:
a survey of Kentucky schools*

Oct. 19, 1988

Dear fellow journalism educator:

The attraction of journalism to minorities continues to be a major concern to you and the rest of us in the journalism profession. Despite national efforts in the communication industry, the number of minorities in the newsrooms, broadcast centers, and production studios remains low. As you know, many career decisions are formed while a student is in high school. For this reason, minority interest in high school journalism has become a focal point of those concerned with increasing the number of minorities in the journalism/communications field.

Since you are in daily contact with future journalists, your help is needed. You are one of 100 Kentucky high school journalism teachers/publications advisers randomly selected for this study. The purpose of the study is to analyze minority student interest in journalism and publications, as class activities and as professions. Would you please take ten minutes out of your very busy schedule and complete the enclosed questionnaire? Your participation is vital to this study. Just mail it back to me in the enclosed stamped envelope. Your name is not needed; anonymity is guaranteed.

Again, as a fellow teacher and adviser, I share the demands that are made on your time, and I know you share with me the concern for this study.

Sincerely,



WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

BOWLING GREEN, KENTUCKY 42101

Department of Journalism

*Minorities in high school journalism:
a survey of Kentucky schools*

Oct. 28, 1988

Dear fellow journalism educator:

Recently I sent you a short survey regarding a study I am doing about minority students and their attraction to journalism and student publications. Perhaps you already have sent that back. If so, I want to thank you for taking time out of your busy day to help. As I mentioned in the first letter, you are one of 100 Kentucky journalism teachers chosen for this study. If you haven't had a chance to return the questionnaire, another is enclosed, along with a stamped envelope. Would you please return it to me today?

Again, your help is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Minorities in high school journalism: a survey of Kentucky schools

1. Enrollment of your school____
2. Minority enrollment of your school____
3. Which classes do you teach?
4. Your undergraduate major_____ minor_____
5. Do you have state certification to teach journalism? Yes___ No___
6. Publications you advise: Yearbook___ Newspaper___ Magazine___
7. Which, if any, of your publications are produced as part of a journalism class?
Yearbook___ Newspaper___ Magazine___
8. If you teach a journalism class, how many students are in that class this semester?____
9. How many of the students in #8 are minority students?____
10. Please give the number of students on: Yearbook___ Newspaper___ Magazine___
11. Number of minority students on: Yearbook___ Newspaper___ Magazine___
12. How many of the minority students in #8 and 11 are considering going to college?
Yearbook___ Newspaper___ Magazine___ Journalism class___
13. How many of the minority students in #12 are considering majoring in journalism/communications?
Yearbook___ Newspaper___ Magazine___ Journalism class___
14. What ways have you used to recruit minority students into your school's journalism/publications program? (Check any which apply)

___recommendation of other teachers	___recommendation of guidance counselors
___recommendation of other students	___recommendation of parent
___your own recruiting efforts	___student's personal interest
___high English grades	
___Other (please explain)	
15. What do you think is the major factor that attracts minority students to your journalism/publications program?
16. What do you think is the major factor that keeps minority students from your journalism/publications program?

17. What do you think minority students consider the most important when determining if they will or will not go to college? (pick one)

- ☐ cost ☐ location ☐ prestige of school ☐ athletic reputation
- ☐ scholastic reputation ☐ advice from peers ☐ advice from parents
- ☐ advice from high school teachers ☐ college recruitment efforts
- ☐ a relative or friend attends/has attended that school ☐ availability of financial aid
- ☐ prestige of a particular major ☐ personal campus visit
- ☐ percentage of other minorities at that school
- ☐ perception of how professors view minority students
- ☐ how the college will help in finding internships/jobs
- ☐ Other (please explain)

18. Which of the options in #17 do you feel parents consider most important for their children when determining a college to attend?

19. What do you think minority students consider most important when determining a college major/career option?

- ☐ average salary ☐ prestige ☐ room for advancement ☐ personal fulfillment
- ☐ a chance to help other minorities ☐ excitement of the field ☐ working conditions
- ☐ challenge of the job ☐ a chance to change/improve the world
- ☐ Other (please explain)

20. Which of the options in #19 do you think parents of minority students consider most important for their children in determining a college major/career option?

21. What comments do you have concerning the subject of this study or this survey?

APPENDIX II
COMMENTS OF RESPONDENTS

--Please note that these answers are based on the recent years of economic recession that our community is suffering and will continue to experience. It is becoming more and more evident to the classroom teacher that the families of our community are under great stress and it is influencing all decisions.

--In my situation, the minority students make up a very small percentage. I have only had two minority students in my class. Very little is being done (except rarely in athletics) to encourage them to pursue higher education.

--I always put on the staff those capable black students who have completed the media 102 class. We need their influence on the staff. One of my very best journalism students ever was a black girl who went on to major in journalism and pre-law.

--In Eastern Kentucky, we don't have a significant number of minorities. We have some blacks, but no Asian, Hispanic or native-American students. Since the poverty rate is so high, everyone is pretty much in the same boat.

--The interest needs to be sparked on the high school level but I'm at a loss for how to do that. Those who aren't self-motivated (minority or not) don't have a place on the staff.

--Minorities at this school have the same concerns as other college prospects. They are encouraged to capitalize on minority opportunities. Many do.

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